

# **Out of the Closet and into the Political Arena: Can the Internet Become a Location for Queer Movements?**

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## **Abstract**

Many papers have closely examined cyberspace facilitates queer subjectivity. Cyberspace constitutes a contested space in which new discursive practices are developed. This paper follows the previous discussions and focuses on radical democracy and new social movements. Then, this paper discusses mainly whether the Internet can become a location for social movements, particularly for queer folks. I also explores following questions: How will the Internet influence the development of social movements? Why do queer movements do always choose the Internet as their location? Can the goals of these movements be realized through the Internet? To answer these questions, this paper analyzes the case of Taiwan's queer movement case to shed light on potential advantages stemming from the Internet use. Finally, this paper proposes a further question—the relationship among capital, habitus and queer movements.

**Keywords: Queer movement, the Internet, Radical democracy**

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*[The gay and lesbian] movement of revolt against a particular form of symbolic violence, as well as bringing into existence new objects of analysis, very profoundly calls into question the prevailing symbolic order and poses in an entirely radical way the question of the foundations of that order and the conditions for a successful mobilization with a view to subverting it. (Bourdieu, 2001: 118)*

## **I. Introduction**

There is no denying that information and communication technologies have become a part of social movements. Information technologies could be used in the pursuit of different social and functional goals because what the Internet offers, fundamentally, is a flexible space. These information technologies have had a major impact on the form that social movements take. For instance, the widespread penetration of computer and telecommunications information systems is altering the dynamics of social movements and, in particular, is increasing the political participation and communication through the Internet. In addition, the Internet is also quite helpful to queer folks<sup>1</sup> those who are always situated in the realm of closet. This invisible and unspeakable situation, as Gamson (1992: 5-6) mentions, arrests communication: it concerns the “limited capacity of individuals and groups to engage in political communication because of the nature of their linguistic environment (a restricted speech code) and not because of any apparent political intervention.” Thus, queer folks need a space in which (1) to struggle and (2) to make their own voices heard: in my opinion,

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<sup>1</sup> The term “queer” bears with it very complex meanings: in a broader definition, queer means differing in some odd way from what is usual or normal; in a narrower definition, it describes anyone who differs from the heterosexual norm. Here, I prefer the term queer to mean gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, intersexed, or in other ways queer because of one’s sexual identity or orientation.

cyberspace is a good location where it is possible for them to resist heterosexual domination.

Many scholars point out the Internet plays an increasingly significant role in “communication turn” in queer movements. This new technology has played in providing a relatively unrestricted forum for queer folks to create their own world. For instance, independent websites provides a venue in which queers make themselves heard regardless whether publishers perceive them as a viable target demographic. Further, these independent websites support queers who feel their identities are not recognized or respected in the cultural mainstream. It can be said that queers have been among the most conspicuous of minorities to capitalize on the liberties facilitated by the Internet. They have established mechanisms of communication through world wide web (www), chat rooms, e-mails lists and other Internet modalities.

In this paper, I want to answer these questions with theoretical debates: (1) Can the Internet become a location for queer movements? (2) What kinds of influence (both positive and negative) will the Internet have on the development of queer movements? And (3) why do queer movements seem to always choose the Internet as their location? The analyzed data in this paper come from some parts of varied and fragmented collections in my dissertation<sup>2</sup>, including face-to-face interviews; journalists’ reports in

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<sup>2</sup> The dissertation title is “No more gods and monsters: remapping queer culture in educational and cultural fields.” My dissertation hinges particularly on relevant theoretical arguments concerning the domination and the resistance that characterizes the representation of queer folks as they are represented by the discernible human relationships of those very cultural-queer members whom the learning institutions at large would prefer to ignore or obscure. With regard to the data of face-to-face interviews in this dissertation, I interviewed 39 informants from October 2003 to August 2004. Not all the informants were queer, but some of the straights professed a strong relationship to queer issues or queer culture or labeled themselves pro-queer. The population of informants consists of 23 queers and 16 straights.

newspapers, magazines, or websites, and reflexive fieldwork notes. Here, the reader should be aware that I want to develop my own argument about the Internet as a significant location for queer movements through theoretical sensitivity and relevant ethnographic interviews. That is, the real purpose is not to create grounded arguments from observations in a way that parallels the actions of qualitative methodologists, who portray everyday action in concrete settings. On the contrary, my purpose in this paper is to review relevant theoretical debates of queer movement via some anecdotes from my past fieldwork.

## **II. Theoretical Reviews**

### **(1) What is a social movement?**

*Social movement* is a blurry term that may be seen from several divergent perspectives. The North American resource mobilization theories (RMTs) and the European new social movement (NSM) approach are the two most significant theoretical approaches to social movements. In general, resource mobilization theory is based on the notion that social movements are rational responses to social conditions that can only occur given sufficient and appropriate resources (McCarthy & Zald, 1977). They have studied topics such as what characteristics of organizations lead to greater abilities for movements to mobilize quickly and adapt (Piven & Cloward, 1977; Tarrow, 1998), gain legitimacy, avoid conflict, and increase capacity (Gamson, 1990), and increasingly focused on organizational structures and processes and how these relate to goal attainment and movement sustainability. In recent years, research on social movements has extended the logic of RMT to examine social movement organizations as rational actors in themselves. Thus, movements are seen as themselves “responding”

to external forces (such as political shifts) through, for example, strategic framing (e.g. Gamson & Meyer, 1996). In addition this literature has studied effects of networking among social movement organizations on individual participation, movement sustainability, and political change (e.g. Diani & McAdam, 2004). That is, movements are best defined as collective challenges to existing arrangements of power and these movements' distribution of people who exhibit common goals and solidarity with one another and who sustain an interaction with elites, opponents, and authorities.

For Touraine, on the contrary, a social movement involves a double reference to cultural orientations and social relations, as opposed to social projects and contested structures of domination. More simply, then, the type of collective actions in which Touraine is interested and for which he reserves the term social movement comprises struggles affecting any cultural pattern that involves the present functioning of society (Touraine, 1981). That is, organizational formats and procedures are themselves a contested terrain because they are called to express and represent shared programs, claims, and ideals. Organization is not only an instrumental resource to maximize utility but also a figurative resource to legitimize a protest-based praxis and to express collective identities and goals. For Melucci, a significant scholar in the NSM camp, organization becomes a topic on, and medium of, the construction of a social movement's collective identity because the "form of movement is the message" (Melucci, 1985: 801). In short, new social movements form new, critical publics. By means of communicatively rational engagement they call the system into question and set the agenda for a normative revitalization of it.

Many scholars already regard queer movements as one kind of new social movement, and I also walk on the same track. In general, NSM

theorists argue that the movements that have developed since the 1960s, such as the environmental or anti-nuclear movements, are values-centered and are not based on the achievement of private interests. They consider that, traditionally, movements have been class-based and oriented toward economic goals. Opposing themselves to these traditional conceptions, these theorists argue that these movements tend to embody “post-material values” (Opp, 1990) and are motivated by a sense of identity or cultural attributes that correspond to certain forms of movement participation. NSM theorists may characterize the importance of media (like the Internet in this paper) in terms of the need to sustain a culture or foster a collective identity that is associated with movement participation. That is, participation in the public sphere through relevant media helps cultivate a sense of community, so that people care more and think more about the wider world; in this way, participation becomes a source of meaning-making power. In addition, the NSM theory’s emphasis on identity politics provides a basis on which to challenge the oppression that agents experience. Identity movements, such as feminist movements, queer movements, and so on, are attempts either to transform dominant cultural patterns or to gain recognition for new social identities, by employing expressive strategies. Since identity markers require public mobilization to be recognizable, this plurality of concerns contains a common denominator: the request that a collective identity should be recognized as different others.

To apply this idea into the Internet, Castells (2001) proposes the term “networked social movements”—for the environmental movement, ethnic identity movements, and various human rights movements—to describe the way in which cyberspace has become a significant electronic agora where the diversity of groups creates new cultural meanings to resist oppression. That is, social movements in the Information Age are essentially mobilized

around cultural values.<sup>3</sup> The struggle to change the codes of meaning and the practices of society is the essential struggle in the process of social change in the new historical context. Castells contends that both the communication of values and the mobilization around meaning are becoming fundamental at the dawn of the twenty-first century. Thus, to understand and explain the outcome of political mobilization is to enquire into the structure and rhetoric of public communication and collective action and its societal context. Then, we can understand better the dynamics of the agenda-setting that shapes the public discourse on social movements.

## **(2) Radical Democracy and New Social Movements**

Second, new social movements, like queer movements, have some elective affinities with the idea of radical democracy. Radical democrats try to strengthen political bases by designing micro-and macro-institutions intended to remove barriers of participation and heighten the quality and deliberative character of democratic institutions and processes (Offe & Preuss, 1991: 165-171). For instance, in Laclau's opinion, radical democracy opens new positions of speech and thus both empowers previously excluded groups and enables new aspects of social life to become part of the political process (Laclau, 1990). That is, radical democracy is a strong way to empower people, and participation is the central creative mechanism mediating between institutions and motives. Public discussion is seen as a

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<sup>3</sup> In the queer context, the particular form of symbolic domination suffered by homosexuals is one linked not to visible sexual signs but to sexual practice. Bourdieu argues that the dominant definition of the legitimate form of this practice wherein the masculine principle (active, penetrating) establishes a relation of dominance over the female principle (passive, penetrated) implies the taboo of the sacrilegious feminization of the masculine, i.e. of the dominant principle, which is inscribed in the homosexual relationship (Bourdieu, 2001: 119). Thus, Joshua Gamson (1995) argues that social movement theory must take seriously the goal of contemporary queer politics to deconstruct social categories, including man, women, gay, and straight. Both of these opinions are centered on the deconstructing of value systems.

mechanism ensuring that any political action has to pass the test of public consent; that political action has to be justified before the public. Thus, expansion of public communication provides a public ritual of debate in which more actors than ever before can take part.

Radical democratic views reject a popular, individualistic way of thinking wherein people would have a free or pure self that pre-exists social relationships. On the contrary, radical democratic theorists imagine a kind of political community whose members debate many of their own assumptions. The democratic political community that Habermas envisioned relies on a shared dedication to free debate about the public good. Habermas argued that the possibilities for rational, critical communication develop in tandem with individuals' capacities to act in a reflective, self-directed way. Similarly, Lichterman (1996: 220-221) argues that collective practices embody a strong will to replace uncritical habits of thought or unquestioned authoritative decrees with explicit agreements ratified through discussion. Thus, new social movements have practiced democratic "communicative action" as democratic personal expression.

There are many classical works discussing media and public communication. For instance, in the historical context, members of the Frankfurt School such as Horkheimer and Adorno (1988) and Habermas (1989) through to contemporary media analysts have been concerned with the media's transformation of the public sphere. In addition, classic statements on the media's relation to protest activities include those by Gitlin (1980) and Gamson (1992). The insertion of movements into an issue agenda thus becomes the focus of interest. While participating in public life and doing so with expanding technological development, agents occupy a rather predictable space: a private room equipped with a television or, increasingly, an Internet-connected computer, through which the agents are



linked to the public world. This constituency is quite different from the constituencies described in nineteenth-century accounts of comparable spaces: the coffee house constituency, the newspaper-reading constituency, and the high-culture constituency of politically interested people. In *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, Habermas's contention is that third places in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were critical sites for public discourses.<sup>4</sup> Habermas (1989) perceived the newspaper as a tool of face-to-face dialogue, one that enhanced the critical potential of that dialogue.<sup>5</sup> However, the situation of the Internet is quite different from Habermas's coffeehouse or newspaper, and a certain space does not guarantee rational communication. For instance, Poster (2001: 121) argues that, for Habermas, the crucial aspect of the public sphere was community dialogue, particularly insofar as it was ruled by critical reason. In his analysis, it must be noted that the materiality of print, mediating between government and citizenry, evaporates before the scene of dialogue and debate. Reading and writing are subordinate to speech in Habermas's context. Consequently in Habermas's thesis, a misleading portrait emerges of the public sphere as a logocentric community, rather than as community dependent on the space/time deferrals of print.

Many researchers already consider that the Internet is a community: a

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<sup>4</sup> In what Habermas calls the "ideal speech situation," all participants have an equal opportunity to participate in nondistorted, rational discourse. Habermas's point in calling attention to the coffeehouses and salons of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as exemplary sites for a kind of practiced, democratic engagement was to emphasize that such engagements were situated in a kind of interactive social space; that is, they allowed public communication and opinion formation.

<sup>5</sup> In similar way, Paulo Freire also directly focuses on the notion of dialogue with definite implications for the democratic roles of radical alternative way. He primarily concerned with literacy education for public empowerment, put oppressive structures and political engagement against them at the center of the communication process. However, Freire entirely concentrated on face-to-face interactivity and never extended his vision further to encompass media like the Internet (Dowing, 2001).

virtual public sphere where people meet, chat, conduct activity, or develop a sense of togetherness. The dictionary definition of community describes “a unified body of individuals,” people “living in a particular area,” or in the more general sense, “bodies of persons or nations [that] have a common history or common social, economic, or political interests” (Trend, 2001: 86). That is, a community is conceived as a relationship among peoples. Here, I adopt a broad definition of *community*: any group of people who share a common interest or belief and who support each other for both an individual good and a collective good, as occurs in the [queer] community. Thus, I regard cyberspace as one kind of “imagined community”<sup>6</sup> in that it is built on opinion interaction.

### **(3) Good and bad sense of the Internet**

What are the benefits of the Internet to social movement? Divergent standpoints offer different answers. Followers of technological utopian positions argue that computer networking is revolutionizing society in positive ways. According to this view, technological advances like the Internet democratize information by simplifying the creation, duplication, storage, and distribution of data. In contrast, followers of technological dystopian positions believe that computer networking is changing society in decidedly negative ways. They argue that the burgeoning flows of data that computers have made possible are serving primarily to numb people with a glut of unnecessary and often inaccurate information.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Benedict Anderson (1983) proposed the important term “imagined community.” The very way that people view themselves as members of a group or citizens or a nation hinges on an imaginative leap enabled by common association. “Imagined” because although the members of the community might not know each other, “in the minds of each lives the image of their communication” (6); “community” because “regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship” (7).

<sup>7</sup> For instance, Sunstein (2001) and Shapiro (1999) have come to argue that central features of the Internet and computer-mediated communication generally undermine the

In good sense, the Internet offers tremendous advantages in information dissemination and mobilization. It is a medium open to advocates of possible resource levels (even though, we still need to consider the question of high-speed usage vs. dial-up: many people still do not have computers at home, and libraries may be inaccessible or have inconvenient hours). Rick Fantasia (1988) shows how “cultures of solidarity” are constructed by workers interacting with each other over time in concrete action settings. Ideas emerge and change and are subjected to scrutiny and negotiation as events and conditions are interpreted and reinterpreted. In other words, collective action frames are not merely aggregations of individual attitudes and perceptions but also the outcome of negotiated shared meaning. The Internet has no rival for the inexpensive disseminating of information. In particular, the Internet is a two-way communications system, not simply a distribution system with a voracious appetite for content. Thus, Barbara Cruikshank (1999) names this the “technology of citizenship”: discourses, programs, and other tactics aimed at the transformation of individuals into politically active agents. In its ideal, computer innovators expect that these transformations of technology will enable people to converse more directly with one another. For instance, the Internet has been portrayed as a tool that restores the deliberative component of political communication. It enables the exchange of images, sounds, and text across national borders. The strength of a network is directly proportional to membership, frequency of exchanges, and the trust generated between network memberships. For example, Howard Rheingold (1993) explains that the Internet is a medium that efficiently connects people to one another—people who have common interests, especially highly specialized interests. Thus, the Internet can develop in people a sense of community.

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sort of public sphere and political interaction that is required for genuine democratic deliberation.

While queer folks enjoy the benefits of the Internet, advocates should not forget that it also provides these opportunities to everybody—even opponents to homosexuals, like people who are anti-queer. In addition, we also need to ask whether the Internet provides the same opportunities for democratic participation as do face-to-face encounters. Thus, in bad sense, we need to question can the Internet sustain real community in which people have intense supportive and sociable relationships that provide them with a sense of social identity and social belonging? Put differently, can the Internet help reverse the decline in civic engagement? Or do social movements need a face-to-face form? This concern comes from the argument that the Internet does not establish face-to-face communication and connections. Some contend that cyber-communication is less effective in building bonds than is face-to-face interaction. Many inhabitants of cyberspace have never met face-to-face and have no intention of doing so.<sup>8</sup>

Even though there are some known limitations to this new technology, the importance of the Internet as an enabling environment for queer discourse, as a means for communication between various parties on topics relevant to queer life that cannot perhaps be so readily discussed in other venues, and as a locus of interaction between a multitude of subcultures cannot be denied. Warf and Grimes (1997) maintain that the Internet can provide access to skills and resources that are not present in local areas but are needed in local struggles, transcending scale limitations. Thus, the Internet can sustain counter-hegemonic discourses and can challenge established systems of domination, a process that legitimates and publicizes political demands made by the powerless and marginalized.

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<sup>8</sup> Of course, the face can be digitally photographed and transmitted, simulating the interpersonal character of the face-to-face encounter. In a sense, technologies like video conferencing provide a different inflection of the “face-to-face” meeting. In virtual organizations, the lack of sustained physical contact reduces the organization’s ability to generate trust (Handy, 1995).

Counter-hegemony, in the cyber context, refers to varied messages from groups and individuals who refuse to take existing ideologies and politics as normal, natural, or necessary and who typically swim against the tide of public opinion.

In this vein, Diana Saco (2002) describes cyberspace as a heterotopia.<sup>9</sup> This notion, proposed by Foucault, is a counter-site that challenges the normalized ordering of the spaces to which the site relates. Heterotopia is that “disturbing” space of otherness where mismatched objects appear together. Heterotopias refer to relationships between space inasmuch as they “have the curious property of being in relation with all the other sites, but in such a way as to suspect, neutralize, or invert the set of relations that they happen to designate, mirror, or reflect” (Saco, 2002: 14). A heterotopia is a kind of in-between space of contradiction, of contestation: a space that mimics or simulates lived spaces but that, in so doing, calls those spaces we live in into question. In other words, heterotopias are real and existing places that function as counter sites to hegemonic space. Similarly, Kevin Hetherington (1997: 9) argues that the term *heterotopia* can be understood as a “space of an alternative ordering.” Even though the concept of heterotopia outlines a process of transformation for queer folks, it comes as no surprise that cyberspace still conveys a heterosexist bias. In this line of thinking, Richard Davis (1999) demonstrates why the Internet will not lead to the social and political revolution so widely predicted. Davis proposes two reasons: (1) existing dominant players are adapting to the Internet in order to retain preeminence; and (2) the Internet is not an adequate tool for public political involvement: most people do not have time to “surf the web.” They

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<sup>9</sup> Foucault points out that a heterotopia is a real place, which is like a counter-site—a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted. The study of heterotopias could provide a sort of mythic and real contestation of the space in which we live (Foucault, 1986: 24). In other words, the concept of heterotopia creates the metaphor for possible transformation.

want information they feel they need, and they want it quickly and efficiently.

### **III. The Internet as a location for queer movement**

#### **(1) What does the Internet do to social movements?**

In general, the Internet's capacity for information dissemination and mobilization has profound consequences for politics. It has resulted in a medium that represents a tremendous increase in the ability to disseminate information and mobilize. For instance, the Internet strengthens people's ability to obtain primary documents that they previously relied on journalists to interpret. Likewise, blogs are online journals or e-newsletters in which the most recent entries are added to the top of a document. Blog authors, or bloggers, can write on any subject matter. A number of people outside traditional journalism have created blogs that emphasize news, especially commentary (Klotz, 2004). This raises the crucial issue of digital literacy, which emphasizes how viewers use media in individualized ways to learn something. In this context, the digital literacy of queerness holds political significance. Not only can it help viewers to decode complex sign systems, but it can also connect theory and practice—often by explaining complex theories to queer folks. Digital technologies hold promise as mechanisms facilitating alternatives for civic engagement such as political chat room conversations, electronic voting in elections, and the mobilization of virtual communities, all of which thus revitalize mass participation in public affairs. That is, the Internet may broaden involvement in public life by eroding some of the barriers to political participation and civic engagement, especially for many groups currently marginalized from mainstream politics.

Focusing on the queer context, the Internet is providing an alternative

and cheaper medium through which queer folks can easily interact with each other.<sup>10</sup> The cheap and anonymous Internet has been a great enabler of queer culture, and it marks a substantial gain in the ability of citizens to receive information, mobilize, and interact with others. E-mail has become a fundamental means of communication for most queer folks and is used regularly for both personal and professional functions. Although the Internet creates some advantages for queer mobilization, we also need to pay attention to the distinction between access and use, which becomes apparent in the context of public places. There is a huge gap between the many people who have access to queer issues on the Internet and the few who actually participate in discussions on these issues. In particular, many queer Internet users tend toward “political evaporation,” which results in an evacuated political discourse that is less generously open-minded than private discourse (Eliasoph, 1998). Although anonymity on the Internet seems to decrease fears to reveal one’s true identity, Chang (2003) has pointed out some limitations affecting queer movement through the Internet. He uses the notion of the panopticon to question the idea of anonymity on the Internet, which queer communities proclaim to be its advantage. In cyberspace, many queer folks still fear that others will discover their sexual orientation. In addition, he also proposes that “one-dimensional interaction and monologue” and the “limitation of minorities’ assessment due to cultural capital” create certain limitations for this movement. After all, every person is not equally likely to be an Internet user.

However, the most important potential of all is that the Internet will facilitate interpersonal discussion eventually resulting in political action.

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<sup>10</sup>Tambini (2001: 250) points out that the impact of computer-mediated communication (CMC) on mobilization concerns three areas: (1) cost of mobilization (for example, of propaganda); (2) network logistics (that is, finding those who share your interests); and (3) stigma or illegality (the need to mobilize secretly). These three areas can fit queers’ current situation.

That is, the Internet stirs up a mechanism that inspires people to voice their true political needs. As Scheufele (2001: 20) has stated, “The relationship between news consumption and political participation depends on the value of the third variable, such as interpersonal discussion.” Talking about politics helps individuals gain mobilizing information from media sources and thus increases their willingness to participate. Interpersonal discussion of politics plays a significant role in “translating mass-mediated messages into meaningful individual action” (2001: 29). Thus, people who engage in interpersonal discussion with others about what they have read or heard in mass media will have disproportionately higher levels of understanding than people who do not engage in political discussions or who do so less frequently.<sup>11</sup> Similarly, in Lichterman’s fieldwork on queer talk, this scenario at its peak illuminates conditions that encourage more multivalent, critically reflective identity talk in some settings, and more univalent, narrowly affirming identity talk in others. His case exhibits the possibilities and the limitations in visions of active citizenship that highlight public-spiritedness and diverse identities on the Internet. Through participant observation, he analyzed, specifically, identity talks in two sexual minority settings, spent six months as a participant-observer, and interviewed twenty members involved with the Internet forum. In addition, he read the group newsletters and flyers that appeared during the study, along with the local queer newspaper. His research group included one member of an active sexual minority group called queer people (QP); the other members participated in the coalition-building network Network Against the Right’s Agenda (NARA). He observed imagined allies or communities through cyberspace as a way to explore queer issues. In his research, Lichterman emphasizes

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<sup>11</sup> Scheufele’s argument is consistent with Eliasoph’s ethnographic research. Eliasoph argues that “talking through vague political processes, playing with their ideas in the light of day” (1998: 231) helps citizens to understand political processes, reconcile potentially inconsistent points of view, and make informed decisions.



both the potential of social movements for critical, forum-like discussion and the limits of cyberspace as an alternative space for critically reflective talk among queer folks. These two groups (QP and NARA) contained forums to the extent that they valued critically reflective discussion about members' interests and collective identities. The forum lens of analysis required examinations of everyday-conversation as it unfolded in naturally occurring settings. He drew the particular conclusion that a multicultural democracy needs not only multiple forms of identity talk but also flexible forms of solidarity that sustain both unities and particularities. Thus, by engaging in personalized political strategies that fit their lifestyles, people may be just as effective in changing attitudes through the course of their daily lives (Lichterman, 1999).

In my opinion, interpersonal communication will result in people's negotiating of meanings. This is a change of focus from the rhetoric of the elite speaker to the rhetoric of the emerging or subaltern voice. In particular, on the Internet, queer folks can express their opinions more easily than through other media.<sup>12</sup> Thus, through analyzing the queer discourse in the Internet can we access the lifeworld of the oppressed. In the next section, let me use Taiwan case to demonstrate the theoretical arguments mentioned above which can be operated in the certain context.

## **(2) Queer Movement in Taiwan**

There is no denying that there are many variations across Asian regions in queer movements. Any consideration of the new queer scene in Taiwan

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<sup>12</sup> To discuss the difference between print and the Internet, Mark Poster (2001: 16) points out that the Internet transgresses the limits of the print and broadcast models by (1) enabling many-to-many communications; (2) enabling the simultaneous reception, alteration, and redistribution of cultural objects; (3) dislocating communicative action from the posts of the nation, from the territorialized spatial relations of modernity; (4) providing instantaneous global contact; and (5) inserting the modern/late modern subject into an information machine apparatus that is networked.

must begin by acknowledging the influence of the Internet. It's clearly a major contributor to the growth and cohesion of the queer community. More invisibly and much more popular, queers are networking in cyberspace—chatting, arranging friendships and organizing activities. This represents that Taiwan is at the forefront of both hi-tech usage and queer awareness in Asia. For instance, Berry and Martin (2003) focus on the emergent queer communities in Asia (one case is Taiwan, and the other is South Korea). They claim not only that the net provides a space in which heterogeneity is produced, but also that the anonymity of cyberspace has been a crucial precondition for the development of queer communities in societies where it is socially difficult to have a queer identity in the offline world. In Taiwan, there are several available technologies: (1) the oldest form of interactive Internet communication in Taiwan is Internet Relay Chat (IRC); (2) there are the popular sites on BBS known as Motss (member of the same sex) boards, which allow for group “chat,” one-on-one “talk,” and the publication of documents or “posts.” And (3) there are the newer World Wide Web sites. These technologies host discussions on queer politics and culture; for instance, debates about movement strategy, responses to homophobia, debates over current developments in local feminism, and issues related to gender and sexuality in local culture were all frequently addressed. Thus, Berry and Martin (2003) point out that queer activists in Taiwan have distributed information about current issues and activities in this way and that the sites were also used to collect signatures for petitions to the government on issues relating to sexuality.

With regard to the historical development of the queer movement in Taiwan, the first queer activist and social organization was established in 1990: a lesbian group<sup>13</sup> named Between Us. In the years that followed, queer

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<sup>13</sup> In Taiwan, queer movements started out as branches within feminist movement, when the queer activists, unable to fully come out, joined the women's movement to secretly

social and political groups began to appear island-wide, often starting out on university campuses (as with National Taiwan University's Lambda Society or Gay Chat).<sup>14</sup> Queer activists, lobbyists, and campaigners (college or graduate students were the majority) soon became a significant public and media presence, tackling a variety of issues including the treatment of people living with AIDS/HIV; police harassment of gay men in public cruising areas, private clubs, and saunas; and the effacement of lesbians in Taiwanese feminism (Martin, 2003).

The most important historical event was the series of protests about Taipei's New Park<sup>15</sup> by the Gay/Lesbian/Queer Space Action Front. These public protests targeted the city government's autocratic handling of decisions about the future of New Park. The whole event transpired as follows:

The city government's rhetoric of democratization and liberalization

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promote gay-positive consciousness and succeeded in obtaining support from within the movement. This is very similar to that of the queer movement in the United States. In general, the women's movement, or feminist movement, brought a certain weight to lesbian issues, after which lesbian groups gradually became independent from the women's movement. When lesbian groups were established, they facilitated a rethinking of gay rights, the oppression of males, and gay organizations. Of course, both gay and lesbian groups create possibilities for discussions on bisexual or transgender issues.

<sup>14</sup> Lambda society is a lesbian student group; Gay Chat is a gay student group; both are formal student groups in campus. Gay Chat's formal title is Study Group of the Male Homosexual *Problem*, and this ironic name comes from the school's requirement reflecting the homophobic attitude of the school's administration systems. However, few universities have queer groups or campus LGBT centers in Taiwan. But there are many underground organizations now, and they adopt euphemistic strategies like the use of jazz clubs that cover for queer study groups (2004-10-9 from udn.com).

<sup>15</sup> Taipei's New Park (since 1997, "The February 28 Memorial Park") is Taiwan's best known gay male cruising spot and, as such, has been alternately notorious and celebrated at least since the 1983 publication of prominent modernist author Pai Hsien-Yung's novel *Crystal Boys* (literally, "Evil sons"), which tells the stories of a group of young male sex workers and their patrons who gathered in the park in the 1970s. In other words, the meaning of New Park in this novel shifted from a land of darkness to a playground where all homosexuals could joyfully express themselves.

included ostensible support for sexual liberalization in a willingness to support gay rights; indeed, one of Chen's promises to Taipei queers during his 1994 election campaign (he is the current president of Taiwan) was that if elected he would organize a public queer street party. He proclaimed that he is the gay person's comrade (in Chinese pronounced tongzhi's tongzhi; tongzhi means comrade and homosexual in Mandarin). However, the party never took place. In addition, initiatives carried out under Chen's government included the clean up obscenity campaign, which involved a crackdown on illegal prostitution and pornography and, perhaps relatedly, queer cruising in New Park and adjacent streets. That is, mayor Chen planned the redevelopment of the New Park. As a response to this, the queer space alliance was formed and spoke out frequently and publicly against the government's disregard for the collective queer history of New Park, its flouting queer human rights and the heterosexism of its vision of cleaning up the city to make it a "happy, hopeful" one that would effectively preclude queer visibility in public spaces. The queer space alliance's spokesman said that as residents of Taipei, gays and lesbians need to be a part of the city. This alliance claims, "what is ignored...in this plan for urban renewal is the major significance for queers of New Park as a site of collective memory. One can foresee that after the redevelopment of this site, queers will be forced to leave New Park, and this space filled with queer history will disappear without a trace" (qtd. from Martin, 2003: 97).

This event was the first completely public queer event to be held in Taiwan and also aroused some debates in BBS. One interesting phenomenon related to the Internet: the new park of the queer website (called "My Friend's World of True Love") was represented through nostalgia for the park's homosexual past. This website should be seen in its context as an example of the thriving Internet culture that arose in Taiwan from the mid-1990s as an element of the queer subcultural and activist boom. The

major content of this website was a series of six short stories written about happenings in and around New Park (Martin, 2003: 97-99). Interestingly, it is finally the space of the Net peopled by the recently formed counter-public of queer Net-users that has been reconstituting the realness of the park's historical space, and this experience indicates that the Internet has become the primary foundation of the queer movement in Taiwan.

Besides this earlier experience of the queer movement on the Internet, in the 2001 legislative election, queer activists recommended legislative candidates who were sympathetic to homosexuals and supportive of queer rights. This campaign was launched online and through other relevant media. The activists tried to build an open society on the Internet where queers, by conducting on-line advocacy campaigns for specific candidates, could expect to be treated as ordinary people and not as perverts. This kind of advocacy stands in sharp contrast to the openly homophobic political atmosphere generally. In 2003, Taiwan's vice president Annette Lu (呂秀蓮) has stated that AIDS is a punishment from the gods. Recently, Legislator Hou Shui-Sheng (侯水盛) was speaking before the legislature during a meeting of the Sanitation, Environment, and Social Welfare Committee. Hou said that the legalization of gay marriage would result in national annihilation because same-sex unions could not produce the offspring required for sustainable development—"if gays all got married, no-one would have children anymore and Taiwan would perish." This argument prompted queer groups to quickly organize protests through Internet mobilization.<sup>16</sup> Members of gay and lesbian groups protested in front of the

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<sup>16</sup> For instance, in December of 2003, I encountered one college student in Hsinchu who identified herself as a lesbian. She participated in this activity because her school group supported this protest rally. According to her, the group members used e-mail to discuss, in detail, relevant issues including how to develop protest posters, banners, banderols, and slogans. Sometimes the Internet creates a collective anger that permeates—and strengthens—the atmosphere of a mobilization effort. For instance, many updated articles on the website appeal to some undecided queer folks' anger to the extent that these

Legislative Yuan to express their outrage at Hou's comment. The demonstrators said that the Democratic Progress Party (DPP) had moved away from its pledge to protect the civil liberties of homosexual people. They demanded that the DPP discipline Hou and that the legislator issue a formal apology for offending homosexual people (2003-12-18 from udn.com). Relevant queer groups collectively designed a public performance of resistance through e-mail and chat room communication: to ironically mock Hou's comment about queers, one actor dressed up as a hen and laid eggs before the media, and a few actors with signs about homosexuality, sterility, and DINK (dual income no kids) kneeled down on the sidelines and confessed because, according to Hou's principles, they had sinned. From this protest rally, we witness the speedy mobilization through the Internet.

The other example of police harassment of queer culture was a raid on the queer bookshop Gin Gin's for its open sale of homoerotic magazines. The police went to Gin Gin's on August 25, 2003, and removed more than 500 erotic gay magazines. Gin Gin's filed a petition through the Internet to get a homosexual judge to preside over a case brought against it for selling erotic gay magazines. Gin Gin's proprietor Mr. Lai has been charged with offences against morals, and the prosecutor has asked for a simplified judgment.<sup>17</sup> Lai argued, "When Gin Gin's has these magazines on display, the magazines are always wrapped and marked with clear warning signs on the front. Our customers all know very clearly about the erotic content of the magazines before they pay up" (personal interview 2004-3-3). Lai pointed out that many erotic heterosexual magazines had more provocative content than the confiscated gay magazines and that when police decide to crack

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visitors to the site feel eager to take part in this significant protest.

<sup>17</sup> A simplified judgment is proposed by the prosecutor when (1) the accused has committed only a minor crime but (2) there is already sufficient evidence to convict him or her.

down on “indecent” publications, they should not treat homosexual ones differently from heterosexual ones. Lai also filed a petition with the court to have a homosexual judge preside over the trial and to invite 100 homosexuals to review the magazines to consider whether their content is indecent. He said, “The definition of indecency may vary from person to person, and a homosexual male’s perception of indecency cannot be arbitrated by a heterosexual male, so we would like to have 100 homosexual males to review the magazines and see whether they consider the content indecent” (personal interview 2004-3-3). From this example, we can see that the Internet is a good medium for the collection of petition signatures.

Indeed, from the examples described above, it is clear that, each time they face an important event, queer activists can strengthen their collectivity and their visibility through the Internet. Queer activists can also attend many debates in all kinds of forums (including both friendly and hostile websites) on the Internet to stir up all kinds of controversies. I found one interesting phenomenon on the Internet: because sometimes members of online forums bear very homogenous backgrounds and standpoints (most straights seldom visit queer discussions), it is quite difficult to stir up any serious debate or to discover possible strategies by which to resist hegemonic heterosexuality. Thus, when some queer activists use different pseudonyms to post opposing discourses in the online forum, it generates among many queer members feelings of anger and fervent expressions of opinion. In other words, by fabricating the provoking discursive confrontation on the queer political issues at stake, some queer activists have tried to break the silence of their opponents and to initiate authentic discursive combat. When the debate becomes a burning issue, some straights with bias attitudes will gradually join in the discussions and express different opinions about queerness. Of course, through communicative action, the cultural framework with regard to queerness will increasingly transform itself into different meanings instead

of into purely negative or problematic ones (although sometimes queers will still feel frustrated). This phenomenon reveals that the formation of a value framework in everyday life is not only an abstract process; instead, it “needs to be linguistically actualized and channeled into situations of action,” as Habermas (1987: 87) contends. Situations in which agents can dialogue with agents holding opposing opinions constitute the best example of so-called intertextuality, wherein a text is not a self-contained or autonomous entity but is produced from other texts. The interpretation that a particular reader generates from a text will then depend on the recognition of the relationship of the given text to other texts. That is, intertextuality may be understood as the thesis that no text exists outside its continuing interpretation and reinterpretation. There can never be a definitive reading of a text, then, because each reading generates a new text that itself becomes part of the frame within which the original text is interpreted (Kristeva, 1986). Communicative action helped bring to light the critical position of intertextual practice in the construction of social reality. Thus, I regard this discursive “guerrilla battle”—queer activists’ use of the Internet as a democratizing tool—as a communicative strategy. Of course, in order to increase the visibility of queer issues, queer activists must invest in public discourse, which means engaging in public relations activities.<sup>18</sup> A coalition is an essential strategy used by social movement organizations to advance their political goals, as when queer groups form an alliance with some queer-friendly associations.

#### **IV. Capital, Habitus, and Queer Movements**

We should also focus that collective action frames incorporate

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<sup>18</sup> This is the so-called process of “domain expansion” in social movements; for further discussion, please refer to Jenness (1995).



preexisting beliefs and symbols as well as oppositional values that emerge in the course of a group's struggle. The carryover from preexisting values and understandings illustrates the importance of what Bourdieu considers cultural capital. Factors such as participants' education, gender, race, ethnicity, and class background, generally viewed as structural, provide groups with distinct sets of beliefs and skills, or cultural resources, that shape the contours of their resistance (Lichterman, 1992). For instance, queer movements in Taiwan are sometimes criticized as elitist in character, meaning that their core members are mostly college students or academics, and that these people's connection with other underground gay and lesbian circles and cliques, especially of different social classes or generations, may be slim. Although the Internet facilitates free talk and demonstrates the ability to bring in new participants, there is no denying that many elite-centered representations exist in the world of the Internet. Like the buzzword digital divide is often explained in terms of a lack of the required skills among many people to use the new technologies. Klotz (2004) uses this term to describe the systematic differences between those who have access to, and make use of, digital technologies and those who do not. Higher levels of education make people more comfortable with basic computer functions, whether that means setting up a machine or interfacing with basic computer functions. Moreover, among the important components of the digital divide is age. It is not surprising to find a significant divide between those who are young and those who are older. Certainly in such arenas as e-mail, chat rooms, newsgroups, and other conversational forums, the participants are overwhelmingly young. Just as access to computers, education, and age has caused a digital divide in structural terms, the content of cyberspace creates a cultural divide. Not surprisingly, the two are mutually constitutive. As Poki (pseudonym), one of queer activists in Taiwan, always noted, "I always think about who has the potential and ability to

conduct the queer movement: college or graduate students<sup>19</sup> (because of their age and educational level) have more flexible time and relevant knowledge, and celebrities (because of their discursive abilities) like academic elites can produce discourses and influence media. Both of them carry particular capital and taste. When I became deeply engaged in the queer movement, I found two significant elements that we needed to master: discourse and media. In other words, whether someone can master discourse and media reflects his or her particular cultural capital. Thus, there are inevitable tensions that operate between diverse standpoints and that cause exclusion from—and a specific selection of—discourses” (personal interview 2003-10-30). I agree with Poki’s opinion: the most key point is that, after the 1990s in Taiwan, students have been able to use the Internet with ease and at little or no cost. Queer movements strengthened the trend owing to the Internet’s financial accessibility.

Poki’s argument reminds me of the class or cultural divisions in the queer movement or in any social movement, for that matter. Borrowing from the work of cultural theorists such as Pierre Bourdieu and Paul Willis, Fred Rose argues that the cultural distinction between the middle and working classes is rooted in the organization of work. Class culture consists of the beliefs, attitudes and understanding, symbols, social practices and rituals throughout the life cycle that are characteristic of positions within the production process. Thus, these cultural products of work life are then

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<sup>19</sup> Tan (2001: 128) expressed a similar idea: “the people who post information on these BBS’s or Websites are almost entirely university undergraduates and graduates, and some of them are published writers and researchers specializing in gay and lesbian topics. Hence, opinions expressed within such BBS’s are the thoughts of a part of the movements’ educational elites.” In my opinion, on the one hand, students have much leisure time to participate in a queer movement; and on the other hand, students do not worry about the results of their participation in the queer movement. They also can use academic excuses to legitimize their actions by taking classes on the sociology of gender or on queer theory.

expressed in distinct forms of political action:

“...social class shapes distinct cultural subsystems that order consciousness, organize perceptions, define priorities, and influence forms of behavior. The specific content of consciousness emerges through historical experiences and action within the framework created by class cultures. Movements reflect the class background of participants even if they do not explicitly articulate their goals in class terms. This has enormous implications for when and how people from different classes mobilize politically.” (Rose, 1997: 463)

Thus, we need to focus on protest capital in this context. This idea comes from the nature of cultural capital, itself. A movement actor invests cultural capital in order to make his or her political issue, goals, and activism meaningful, appealing, and convincing to a diversity of audiences. This investment opens up processes of capital transformation because knowledge and know-how can be used to generate economic funds (i.e., a person’s ability to convince others to donate funds) or social contacts (i.e., a person’s ability to persuade others to sympathize with—or to join—queer movements). For instance, celebrity involvement is the central point of campaign events. Their cultural capital translates into protest capital. That is, celebrities’ public statements have weight, and this weight is a collectively recognized and guarded right and privilege to have a valid and legitimate opinion. However, celebrities have this authority and legitimacy only when they are able to incorporate and personify collectively shared values, beliefs, and ideals. Lahusen (1996: 142ff) points out that celebrities’ importance as symbolic figures in public and political life, the identifications they arouse, and their importance as promotional tools in advertising are common topics of investigation. Thus, a celebrity’s habitus<sup>20</sup> will be an important focus in

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<sup>20</sup> Bourdieu emphasizes how a habitus provides resources for the constructing of diverse lines of action and manifests itself most consistently in the form of individuals’ interests and consequent strategies. In particular, Bourdieu has emphasized the importance of the

the future studies. Habitus embodies the lived conditions within which social practices, hierarchies, and forms of identification are made manifest through the choices of individuals, but where those choices already are predisposed by an existing social position. Habitus extends the meaning of the term *lifestyle* beyond its superficial and trivializing connotations (as in “the queer lifestyle”) to a suggestion of intimate connections between ways of living and one’s sense of class, gender, race, and other forms of social belonging. In other words, habitus is constructed through myriad displays of taste that structure lived environments more or less comfortably to reflect our social and cultural position and that maintain boundaries between those environments one feels naturally at home in (that is, those that are class- or gender-appropriate) and those that feel uncomfortable (those that are class- or gender-transgressive).

In this vein, not surprisingly, celebrity status determines the direction of queer movements.<sup>21</sup> One queer celebrity who teaches at the college level told me, “In my opinion, it’s impossible to escape the elitism plight in the emancipatory movement. The academic elite can form an alliance with

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habitus in communicative encounters. The perceptual and linguistic schemes of the habitus shape the ways in which agents make sense or fail to make sense of each other’s communications. This means that they find different meanings in communications to those which the authors of those communications identify in them. It means that they miss the point or just fail to make any sense of what is communicated. Whatever the details, however, communication is always a meeting of habitus and the chances of a consensual meaning being arrived at are always less likely if interlocutors are more distant in social space.

<sup>21</sup> In my opinion, celebrities in queer movement shape the “collective memory” of queerness from the perspective of elite-centered. Collective memories are built up in the work of homogenizing representations of the past and of reducing the diversity of recollection. Collective memory, Halbwachs (1992) asserts, is always selective; various groups of people have different collective memories, which in turn give rise to different modes of behavior. Halbwachs shows, for example, how working class constructions of reality differ from those of their middle-class counterparts. That is, collective memory is not a given but rather a socially constructed notion. In queer movement, celebrities those who can master media and discourse form the so-called collective memory of queerness through the relevant mechanisms of selection and exclusion.

plebeian queers through fieldwork, and this will produce more emancipatory power. After all, plebian queers lack the theoretical training and the discursive abilities that can effectively generate collective actions against heterosexual hegemony” (personal interview, 2003-10-23). I think his insights are accurate for Taiwan’s current situation, although the implication of radical democracy requires equal deliberation and reflection through the process of participation. Local academics, who comment on the new queer cultures so profusely, have become TV and media personalities in their own right, despite their tendency to tirelessly cite Western queer theory. They are designated the powerhouses of this analytical and promotional discourse. Thus, through the social movement, they master discourse and media.

## **V. Conclusion**

Through the Internet, we will witness the possible transformation of the current cultural configuration, and this will be the best evidence of a new social movement. That is, the Internet may be the path that leads to queer equity. In my opinion, the Internet is a platform functioning as a basic structure that offers some imaginable possibilities for queer movements. The Internet, insofar as it offers queer folks a channel that they can use to engage in movements, does not therefore guarantee that each queer is really interested in political issues (some queers may be interested only in surfing for pornography or for meeting sex partners on websites). Subjectivity in the movement relies on those who are really committed to emancipatory goals and the mission of cultural politics. Of course, many queer folks look for the advent of a Messiah: someone who can help them in the struggle against hegemonic heterosexuality. In all social movements, this phenomenon is the best example of free riders. Despite its elite-centered implications as I mentioned above, the Internet is still very important for the queer movement.

We must recognize the fact that queer folks stay in different cities and different schools; thus, the Internet can help them form a space for discussion. I look highly on this new technology because it creates new possibilities for queer movements.

In my view, the core mission of queer movements in Taiwan's context revolves around such cultural politics recording. Cultural politics are crucially important to queerness because they involve struggles over meanings. As Melucci (1989) suggests, new social movements elaborate and negotiate meanings over time, and some even make the question of "who we are" an important part of their internal discourse. Thus, culture has become the field of collective mobilization and social conflict. Social interaction is symbolically mediated and therefore dependent on symbolic forms that allow ongoing communication to be decoded. That is, the struggle over cultural symbols is framed as concern about the transformation of cultural configurations. It is to self-understanding, to making connections to others, that cultural struggle refers.

## **Afterword**

Because my focus is not historical development of queer movement in Taiwan, I only can simply describe certain important events here. Before 1990, Taiwan had no groups advocating gay rights, only a few individuals. The first queer organization was a lesbian one, Between Us, which remains influential and has produced a number of important activists. The first gay group, Gay Chat, was started on the campus of National Taiwan University in 1993. In the decade that's followed, many groups have formed. Increasingly, they have moved into the public eye, both through their own

parades and other western-modeled awareness events, as well as media and police incursions into queer discos and bookstores.

**Important events in Taiwan queer movements include:**

1995. June	First annual event of “Gay and Lesbian Awakening Days” (GLAD), which drew more than 100 participants in NTU campus. This event has traditionally focused on spreading awareness and encouraging dialogue about gay issues.
1995. December	The Gay Action Front is established in reaction to Taipei City Government's plan to redevelop a popular cruising area, the New Park (now 228 Memorial Park).
1996. February	The Gay Action Front held e-vote about the top 10 gender news items of the year and about dream stars for queer folks.
1996. March	The first time in feminist movement has a division for queer folks in “Women 100” parade.
1996. December	Feminists and queer activists advocate security rights in the night due to Pong Wen-Ru (彭婉如) murdered event.
1997. June	Gay Pride Month events take place for the first time in the New Park, establishing a tradition of June as Gay Pride Month in Taiwan (as elsewhere).
1997. July	Police react to an increasingly public gay community through a sweep of a gay cruising area, Changde St, taking 40 to 50 men found in the area to the police station for photographing. Protests led by the Gay Action Front follow.
1998. June	The Taiwan Tongzhi Hotline Association becomes Taiwan's first legally registered gay organization after registering with the central government's Ministry of the Interior. The Association, with Gin Gin Bookshop and other groups, goes on to establish a "Rainbow Community" in Gongguan,

	logging 30 businesses as members. The Hotline is now one of Taiwan's most prominent gay rights organizations.
2000. September	Taipei City Government allots NT\$1 million for annual festival called the Lesbian and Gay Civil Rights Movement, Taipei.
2001. October	Queer activists recommend legislative candidates who are sympathetic to homosexuals and supportive of queer rights.
2003. April	Center for the Study of Sexualities at National Central University, a well-known sex radical academic group, was targeted by conservative women's groups and the media, which made a sensational report on hyperlinks to zoophilia websites on the Center's website. Mass hysteria followed that forced the Center to remove its hyperlinks as well as to be subjected to reviews which were rumored to include possible dismissal of the Center's coordinator and leading sex radical, Josephine Ho (何春蕤).
2003. September	Gin Gin Bookshop (Taipei's only LGBT bookstore) was searched by the police, who confiscated over 500 gay journals. Gin Gin Bookshop, GSRAT (Gender/Sexuality Rights Association Taiwan) and Taiwan Tongzhi Hotline held a press conference to strongly protest such highly discriminatory police action, and demanded that all the journals be returned and that the bookstore not be prosecuted.
2003. November	The first Taiwan Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Pride Parade is held as part of the fourth the Lesbian and Gay Civil Rights Movement festival. Crowds and floats march from the Chaing Kai-shek Plaza to Ximenting.

Summarized by Author



In addition, readers may wonder why I have used Western discourses to analyze and explain phenomena relevant to Taiwan<sup>22</sup>. One important reason is that queer culture in Taiwan is represented as a translocal or transcultural phenomenon bridging multiple cultures' backgrounds; that is, queerness does not have a clearly domestic and independent cultural or symbolic system in Taiwan (Chao, 2000, Chu, 1998). In other words, queer cultural domains are not only intersectionally constituted within a single culture but also constituted at the articulation between different cultures. In fact, the everyday experiences of being queer in Taiwan is shaped by the logic of globalization that in fact reveals the constant negotiation of a "blurry home" as a matter of "here," "there," and "in between." Thus, images of queer sexualities and cultures now circulate around the globe. In spite of the fact that the tendency of globalization will reduce certain social and political signification of queer sexualities and cultures in different contexts, there is no denying that globalization also provides the struggle for queer rights with an expanded terrain for intervention. Like Mike Featherstone argues that the globalization process actually opens up "a dialogical space in which we can expect a good deal of disagreement, clashing of perspectives and conflicts, not just working together and consensus" (1995: 102). Thus, there are more and more hybrid sites of meaning, because "globalization and localization are inextricably bound together" (1995: 103). In short, I am of the opinion that queer culture has become a symptom of globalization: developing from local, grass-root communities, queer activists have utilized global media

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<sup>22</sup> I notice the idea of cultural appropriation: the appropriation of cultural meanings and practices can occur in different interpretations under different locations. My thinking comes from French cultural historian Roger Chartier. Chartier proposes a notion of appropriation which "accentuates plural uses and diverse understanding." This perspective requires "the various uses of discourses and models, brought back to their fundamental social and institutional determinants, and lodged in the specific practices that produce them" (Chartier, 1993: 7). Thus, using western discourses to reflect Taiwan as a cultural appropriation offers some possibilities to transform, reformulate and exceed what we understand currently.

(like the Internet in this paper) to support, inform, empower, lobby and mobilize queer cultures.

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# 跳出酷兒的衣櫃，進入政治的舞台： 網路是否可以成為同志運動的場所？

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## 摘要

許多相關的研究報告早已指出網際網路可以促成酷兒的主體性，也就是，網際網路這個虛擬的空間構成了競逐的場域，在其中可以發展許多論述的實踐。本文也是順應這樣的脈絡與主張，並且把焦點延伸至基進民主與新社會運動等議題的討論。因此，本文主要的關注在於系統性地討論網路是否可以成為社會運動的場所，特別是針對酷兒族群。據此，本文分析以下的問題：首先討論網際網路對社會運動的發展與發聲帶來什麼樣的影響？其次，分析為什麼不論本地或是西方的同志運動總是選擇網路作為其運動的場所？再者，透過網際網路的優勢，是否同志運動的目標足以實現？為了回答這些關切，本文透過台灣同志運動的歷史沿革作為分析的個案，具切地指出網路作為本地同志運動的優勢與缺失，並且進一步提出資本、慣性與同志運動之間的辯證關係。

**關鍵字：**同志運動、網路、基進民主

